

REMARKS

The Official Action of July 17, 2003, has been carefully reviewed. The claims in the application are now claims 1-15 and 17-40, and these claims define patentable subject matter warranting their allowance. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request (in addition to the allowance of claims 17), favorable reconsideration of the previously rejected claims, favorable consideration of the new claims, and allowance.

Acknowledgement by the PTO of the receipt of applicants' papers filed under Section 119 is noted.

The PTO has objected to applicants' specification as lacking a "Brief Description of the Drawing" section, and appropriate correction has been required. Such objection and requirement are respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully note the English translation of the present application at page 7, last paragraph, extending over to page 8. This paragraph constitutes a "Brief Description of the Drawings" section.

Withdrawal of the objection and requirement is respectfully requested.

The claims have been objected to because of a list of informalities given in the Office Action at pages 2 and 3.

a. The applicants assume that what the Office Action refers to as "references to the figures" and "figure numbers" are intended to refer to the reference characters previously in the claims. On this assumption, such reference characters have been deleted. This of course has no affect whatsoever on the scope of the claims.

b./c./e./f./g./h. The examiner's helpful suggestions have been adopted or substantially adopted.

d. Claim 16 has been deleted without prejudice, its subject matter being in any event encompassed by claim 1.

Claim 16 has been rejected under the second paragraph of Section 112. Applicants need not address this rejection at the present time, as claim 16 has been deleted without prejudice, as indicated above.

For the record, however, please note the translation of applicant's specification with relation to Fig. 1, and particularly reference numeral 7, e.g. page 8 of the translation, first full paragraph.

Claim 17 has only been objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but is otherwise indicated as being "allowable... ." Applicants accordingly understand

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that claim 17 is deemed by the PTO to define novel and unobvious subject matter under Sections 102 and 103. Claim 17 has now been redrafted in independent form, and should be in condition for formal allowance.

Claim 16 also has not been rejected on the basis of any prior art, and it too has been indicated in paragraph 15 (page 9) of the Office Action as being "allowable... ." Applicants accordingly understand that claim 16 also is deemed by the PTO to define novel and unobvious subject matter under Sections 102 and 103. New claim 26 replaces claim 16 and is believed to constitute the essence of claim 16. Therefore, applicants believe that claim 26 (and of course all the claims which depend therefrom and incorporate the subject matter thereof) should now be in condition for allowance consistent with paragraph 15 of the Official Action.

Claim 1 has been amended above to incorporate important features of claims 16 and 17, and accordingly applicants believe that claim 1 (and of course all the claims which depend therefrom) are also now in condition for allowance consistent with what is stated in paragraph 15 of the Official Action.

As regards the prior art rejections (paragraphs 8, 9, and 11-14 of the Office Action), applicants believe that no further reply is necessary in view of the amendments presented

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above. In other words, as stated above, applicants believe that the amendments to claim 1 in particular, make claim 1 and all the claims which depend therefrom allowable consistent with what is stated in paragraph 15 of the Official Action, and therefore the prior art rejections need not be addressed.

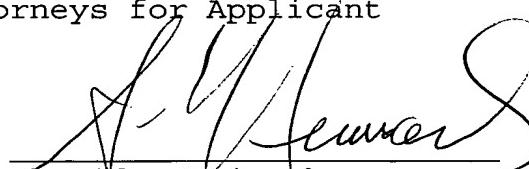
The prior art documents made of record and not relied upon have been noted, along with the implication that such documents are deemed by the PTO to be insufficiently pertinent to warrant their application against any of applicants' claims.

Favorable consideration and early formal allowance are respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,

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